SUMMARY MINUTES OF THE HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION

CITY OF SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA

Lower Level – Room 40, City Hall/Court House, 15 West Kellogg Boulevard **January 14, 2010**

Present: John Manning, Pat Igo, Diane Trout-Oertel, Robert Ferguson, Jennifer Haskamp, Richard

Laffin, Matt Mazanec, Lee Meyer, Mark Thomas, Steve Trimble

Absent: Sherry Enzler (un-excused), April Haas (excused), David Riehle (un-excused)

Staff Present: Amy Spong, Sara Nelson

BUSINESS MEETING

CALL TO ORDER: 5:04 PM by John Manning (Chair)

I. Approval of the Agenda – Trout-Oertel, Igo (10-0)

- II. Conflict of Interest None stated
- III. Approval of the meeting minutes Thomas, Igo (10-0)

Commissioner Trout-Oertel noted that the notes were thorough, which was important because of the topics discussed and decisions made at the December meetings.

IV. Chair's Announcements – Chair Manning welcomed the four new commissioners, and everyone introduced themselves.

V. Staff Announcements

A. **December Design Review Statistics (see attached)** – Staff will cover these at the Annual Meeting later on the agenda.

VI. Public Hearing/Design Review

A. 80-90 West 4th Street, St. Paul Public Library/James J. Hill Reference Library, Individual Site, by Exhibits Development Group, for a temporary sign permit to install several large banners with permanent anchoring on the front and side elevations. File #10-011 (Nelson, 266-6715).

Staff read the background and findings. Chair Manning asked the commissioners if they had any questions for the staff. Commissioner Thomas wondered why the signs on the secondary facades were proposed as two separate signs. To get around needing a variance, the larger sign is classified as public art, so only the sign with text counts in the dimensions. The applicant would add more about that. Commissioner Trimble asked about the Landmark decision, and its precedence. Staff reported that in the agreement, HPC approved the location of the banners, but because of the Landmark Center's use for them, individual design approval was not required. There have been a few different phases of approval of sign locations at the Landmark Center (LC). Commissioner Ferguson wondered why it is OK for the LC to change signs without approval, but want approvals here. In the LC proposal, it was more clear what sorts of exhibits there would be, and there is less familiarity with how both libraries will be using them. Right now, the commission is really approving location and size of signs, as the anchors will be permanent. Chair Manning asked if staff could approve future signage proposals; staff typically approves signs less than 30 square feet, but it could be amended in the recommendations.

The applicant, Bill Keyes, with Exhibits Development Group, spoke on behalf of the project and answered commissioner's questions. He thanked the commissioners for moving up the public hearing to allow more time for installation before the exhibit starts. He stressed that a change in the use at the library is a positive one, both for the libraries and the public. Zoning staff has already said that the proposed designs would meet approval (with HPC approval). Mr. Keyes presented slides about the building and other national landmarks that have signage on their exteriors.

The two banners on the Market Street façade would cover 6.9% of the façade, and he believed that does not clutter or distract from the architectural features. The two banners on the primary façade will cover 1%. He addressed the commissioners' questions about separating the signs, saying that the top banner, at 100 square feet, qualifies and meets the description of a temporary sign, and the larger banner, at 500 square feet, can be classified as public art, therefore not needing its own review through zoning. If the whole sign was confined to the 100 square feet limit, it would be like a "postage stamp" on the façade, and its intention is to attract the attention of drivers on Kellogg Boulevard. The applicant believes that marketing towards Kellogg Boulevard will "make all the difference in the world" in attracting visitors to the exhibit.

Mr. Keyes addressed concerns in the staff report about extra anchors due to splitting the signs into two. It would mean 14 less anchors on each façade, which he did not believe meant jeopardizing a means to "bring new vitality to downtown St. Paul."

Mr. Keyes took questions from the commissioners. Igo asked if the signs say the exhibit is inside the library; they do not – there is "no need; that's the beauty of banners" as opposed to, say, billboards. Commissioner Meyer asked if Mr. Keyes was OK with staff's proposal, which he is in theory, but not, due to the requirement of a zoning variance, which would take at least three weeks (the exhibit opens three weeks from today). Commissioner Ferguson asked for details on anchor installations. There are none yet, due to the uncertainty of the final composition on the facades. Chair Manning said that it was unfortunate having to make this decision due to the pressure of the applicant's timing; the lateness of the application is hindering other options being investigated. He added that in accordance to district guidelines that refer to signs, they should be below the second floor. Mr. Keyes said that having it above the belt course was an aesthetic choice, but he was OK with lowering it. Commissioner Igo wondered if exhibits in the future would be able to use the signs; yes, but due to the size, a variance would be required. Commissioner Laffin commented that since the front of the façade has such a strong vertical emphasis with the windows, the signs on the rear façade should have a vertical emphasis, too. He added that if both signs were below the belt course, that would be even better.

Commissioner Trout-Oertel asked if there was any way to decrease the number of anchorings. The applicant, commissioners, and staff wondered if there was a way the signs could be connected to each other with either rope or a clear strip of vinyl and still count as two (staff later verified this with Zoning staff; it would count as two). Commissioners agreed that if this were an option, it should be the route taken. The applicant said he would be happy to look at those options, as long as a decision could be made quickly.

Kit Hadley with the Public Library read a letter on behalf of herself and Matt Bellin, with the Reference Library. She emphasized that both libraries need to work together to integrate use of space, as well as make the public aware of new uses. She also thanked the commissioners for their time.

Commissioner Meyer asked what the turnaround would be if a variance were required. The

next hearing was in 3 weeks, so early February at least. Meyer moved to approve the application as proposed, without staff recommendations. He added that the second sentence in finding #7 should be deleted. Commissioner Igo seconded the motion. Commissioner Trout-Oertel suggested that the approval be made with staff recommendations 2, 3, and 4. There was a consensus on that. She added a friendly amendment that the applicant shall work with staff to see if Zoning staff could and would approve the two signs connected to reduce anchorings. Chair Manning wondered if there was any language in the recommendation about lowering both signs below the course lines. Commissioner Trimble replied that if not already included, then both signs should be below. He added that while two signs are OK on each façade, they should not be split so that they appear too busy and billboard-like Commissioner Trout-Oertel added that verification of no water infiltration should be included with annual inspections. There was some question as to who the inspection should be reported to; while the HPC staff does not monitor the inspections, as part of the decision, it is the building owner's responsibility to check each year. Commissioners agreed; Meyer and Igo accepted the changes.

The motion carried 10-0.

VII. Old Business

A. Downtown Facade Improvement Program, Evaluate and make funding recommendations to City Council regarding three applications for work on Lowry Hotel, Athletic Club Building, and Lowertown Warehouse. (Spong, 266-6714). **This item was continued from the December 17 HPC meeting.**

Since John Rupp spoke on behalf of the Lowry Hotel and the Athletic Club at the 12/17 meeting, the HPC wanted to hear from the Northern Warehouse applicant, Artspace. Staff reread part of the staff report to refresh the commissioners' memories. Andrew Commers, on behalf of Artspace, a 501c3 non-profit organization, spoke of the Northern Warehouse project. The warehouse is home to an affordable artist community. Artspace would like to recapitalize on the building, partially through selling from the current ownership structure to bring in new funding sources. Façade improvement work would include repairing windows, tuckpointing, a new roof, and common area upgrades. The façade program was recommended to Artspace by Dave Thune and Pat Lindgren. Mr. Commers addressed concerns that no construction-level plans were submitted with the application. Other funding sources are pending, so final drawings are contingent upon all sources of funding being secured. Funds may not necessarily be used by the deadline outlined in the program because of the process to close, finance construction, and begin this summer.

Commissioners asked Mr. Commers about the need for new ownership. Greg Handberg, VP of Artspace, also answered questions related to tax credits and viable financial structures for its residents. Commissioner Laffin asked if cleaning of the brick is included in the proposal; although they would like to do everything, there are not enough funds for it all.

Staff gave a brief history of the façade program, and told commissioners that it is their duty to either rank the three applications or go by staff recommendation, and provide partial funding to all three projects. Chair Manning summed up their decision to be either rank or acknowledge that all three are important buildings and deserve some money. He asked fellow commissioners if they were comfortable with the staff recommendation; they decided that yes, it was fair and equal. Commissioner Trout-Oertel agreed and added that since there is no way to know who truly needs the money, partial amounts to all three was fair.

The motion to move based on staff recommendation was carried 10-0.

B. Adopt resolution memorializing the HPC decision to sign the MOA between the U.S. EPA, Region 5 and the MN State Historic Preservation Office Regarding the Redevelopment of the Former 3M Campus. (Spong, 266-6714). Staff clarified for commissioners what was happening tonight, based on discussions at the 12/3 meeting. Because at that meeting two items were voted on (sign the MOA and further recommendations in the resolution), it got to be cumbersome, so this is the most effective and concise way to summarize the HPC's decision. The resolution will ensure that the decisions and votes have been reflected accurately. Commissioner Igo moved to memorialize the resolution, Lee Meyer seconded it.

The motion carried 10-0.

VIII. ANNUAL MEETING

A. Election of officers for 2010 (Nomination committee: Thomas, Trimble and Riehle)
Commissioner Thomas reported that the committee's recommendation for chair, vice-chair, and secretary remain the same as existing. Chair Manning asked if there was any discussion on the matter.
Commissioner Trout-Oertel said that she would be OK handing off the position for a new member of the executive committee, so withdrew her name from the executive committee nominations.
Commissioner Mazanec wondered the length of term (one year), and he said he would like to be added to the slate. Because an architect can be a valuable asset to the executive committee, it was decided that Commissioner Trout –Oertel would be a good candidate, and she accepted the role.
Commissioner Trimble voted to move the slate. The motion carried 10-0.

B. Draft annual report and permit statistics – see attached Since the HPC is now located within PED, there will be some lag time before the publication of the report. Staff assessed some of the changes within the past year, and guessed that different factors of the economic downturn were the case. There is a major concern that the number of after-the-fact reviews doubled in the last year. It will be need to be part of the 2010 work plan to discuss to do this.

IX. Committee Reports

A. Public Safety Building, 106 Process update (Manning, Igo)
Chair Manning said that the new committee's concern is and will be a difficult task. He updated the new commissioners that the city is a partner in the project and that due to HUD financing, Section 106 process is required. He added that since the resolution passed, the HPC has been removed from the Moa as a signing party; now a 'whereas' has been added to reflect the HPC's decision and comment. Char Manning is most concerned about the city's proceedings and where precedent is set; he also wrote an editorial for the Pioneer Press regarding the HPC decision. He said that he has received feed back from the policemen and fire fighters, and that they have given him a lot of feedback, especially with a unique perspective on the history of the building.

X. Adjourn. 6:55 PM